

Message Text

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22-11

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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SCCT-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 IO-10 AID-05 /077 W

----- 121044

R 040846Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8819

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6960

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG

SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF REINSTATEMENT OF RASHAD SHAWWA AS MAYOR OF GAZA

REF: TEL AVIV 6753

BEGIN SUMMARY: WHILE RASHAD SHAWWA IS IN MANY WAYS OBVIOUS CHOICE TO FILL POST OF MAYOR OF GAZA, HIS POLITICAL LONGEVITY (AND POSSIBLY PHYSICAL AS WELL) WILL DEPEND ON HIS FINDING PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN COOPERATION WITH ISRAELIS AND INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION, AND ON HIS ABILITY TO RESIST TEMPTATION TO PLAY A BROADER ROLE IN ARAB POLITICAL AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE EMBASSY HAD BEEN RECEIVING GLIMMERINGS FOR SOME TIME THAT A MOVE WOULD BE MADE TOWARD SOME FORM OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN GAZA (TEL AVIV 3136), ISRAELIS (AND SWAWWAS) WERE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR EFFORTS TO CONCEAL TIMING OF SHAWWA REINSTATEMENT AND WERE THUS ABLE TO FORESTALL ADVANCE PUBLICITY OF TYPE THAT COULD HAVE JEOPARDIZED DEVELOPMENT FROM OUTSET.

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2. IN EMBASSY VIEW, RASHAD SHAWWA IS IN MANY WAYS AN OBVIOUS

CHOICE FOR MAYOR AS FORMER HOLDER OF OFFICE, PATRIARCH OF LEADING CLAN IN GAZA, AND POLITICIAN "WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN" TO ISRAELIS. LATTER POINT, HOWEVER, COMBINED WITH SHAWWA CLAN'S STRONG PRO-HASHEMITE SYMPATHIES, MEANS THAT HIS REINSTATEMENT IS BOUND TO BE UNPOPULAR WITH MANY CAMP RESIDENTS, WITH SMALL MINORITY OF YOUNGER UNIVERSITY GRADUATES, AND WITH OTHER ELEMENTS OF GAZA POPULATION VIEWED BY SHAWWAS AS "LEFTISTS". DESPITE IMPLICATION BY MOHAMMED SHAWWA TO CONTRARY (TEL AVIV 6929), HAD-PICKED MUNICIPAL COUNCIL IS "REPRESENTATIVE" ONLY OF PRE-1948 POPULATION, NOT OF REFUGGEES WHO COMPRISE LARGE MAJORITY OF GAZA POPULATION BUT ARE FOR MOST PART CONSIDERED BY SHAWWAS AND AND THEIR SUPPORTERS AS MERE WAYFARERS.

3. QUESTION ARISES WHETHER LONG-STANDING OPPOSITION TO SHAWWA CLAN INFLUENCE IN GAZAN AFFAIRS WILL TAKE VIOLENT FORM OR BE CHanneLED THROUGH SOME FORM OF POLITICAL PROCESS. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THERE WERE TWO ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS ON LIFE OF SHAWWA DURING PREVIOUS TENURE, AND PRESS HAS ALREADY REPORTED THAT TWO EXPLOSIVES CHARGES HAVE BEEN THROWN AT HOMES OF SHAWWA FOLLOWERS. WHILE WE CANNOT DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER VIOLENCE AGAINST SHAWWA, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT COMBINATION OF RELATIVE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND TIGHT ISRAELI SECURITY MEASURES HAVE MADE GAZA A MUCH MORE STABLE PLACE NOW THAN IT WAS DURING 1971-72 PERIOD. WE ALSO ASSUME THAT SHAWWA HAS TOUCHED APPROPRIATE BASES IN ARAB WORLD. ON BALANCE, OPPOSITION TO SHAWWA WILL PROBABLY TAKE FROM OF EFFORTS TO THWART ANY INITIATIVE THAT SMACKS OF HAVING ORIGINATED WITH MILITARY GOVERNMENT OR CAN BE CONSTRUED AS STRENGTHENING POSITION OF ISRAELIS IN GAZA. ISOLATED ATTEMPT AT VIOLENCE BY INDIVIDUALS, HOWEVER, CANNOT BE RULED OUT.

4. IN ADMINISTERING TOWN OF GAZA, THEREFORE, SHAWWA WILL HAVE FIND DELICATE BALANCE BWTWEEN COOPERATION WITH OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES AND VISIBLE WILLINGNESS TO EXERCISE HIS FREEDOM OF ACTION. HIS LARGER CHALLENGE, HOWEVER, WILL BE TO FOCUS ON HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS MAYOR OF GAZA AND RESIST THE URGE TO ASSUME A BROADER ROLE IN ARAB POLITICAL AFFAIRS, WHICH WOULD ONLY PROVOKE THE ANTI-HASHEMITE FEELINGS OF MUCH OF THE GAZAN POPULATION. IN THIS RESPECT, "FONMIN" MOHAMMED SHAWWA IS SPENDING THIS WEEK IN JORDAN FOR TALKS WITH KING HUSSEIN.

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